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**Labour Notes.**

A LETTER recently addressed by the Pope to M. Descartins, the well-known Swiss Catholic statesman, recalls once more the deep interest taken by the Holy Father in the working classes, and his anxiety for the amelioration of their position. The Pope alludes to his Encyclical *Novarum Rerum*, which he speaks of as an outcome of his mission to aid and console the weak and afflicted. "We have not failed to deal with the cause of the working classes before the leading authorities of civil society, wishing that a multitude so great and of such importance should not be abandoned without defence to an exploitation which converts into fortunes for some the misery of a large number." His Holiness expresses his satisfaction that at a congress of workmen recently held at Bienna, in Switzerland, and representing countries differing in opinions and religion his Encyclical had been received with acclamation:—"They recognised of themselves that it contains the most precious elements for the defence of their legitimate rights and for the preparation so much desired of solid foundations on which may be elevated an order of things which will be conformable to justice, and which will assure peace in human society by destroying the old distrust between employers and employed." The Pope goes on to point out the power of the Church shown by the experience of all times and all countries, and recognised even by her opponents, for carrying out such an undertaking. He adduces her victory over slavery as a proof of what she can do to relieve the working classes:—"It is also easy to understand that for the attainment of this great work of charity and true humanity, the best method to follow is to seek to imprint deeply in men's minds the precepts of Christianity and to cause the Gospel doctrine to be accepted as at once a gentle and a strong rule of conduct." The Pope, therefore, signifies his approval of the plan adopted by M. Descartins to profit by the congresses, in making the principles developed in the Encyclical to penetrate the souls of the people:—"By the perfect comprehension of these principles, drawn from the sacred writings of the Church, men will be convinced that their legitimate aspirations will be realised not by the inconsiderate disturbance of social order, but under the powerful, salutary, and holy direction of the Spirit of Wisdom that Jesus Christ, Our Lord, caused to descend from Heaven upon the earth for the purpose of guiding mankind." The Pope further approves of a project to call a more important congress to deal principally with laws for the protection from excessive labour of women and children. He points out that no efficacious relief can be found by the workmen in laws varying with different places, "for since goods from different quarters often come for sale to the same place, it is certain that the rules and regulations imposed on the workmen in one place would tend to results favourable to one nation and detrimental to another." "These difficulties, and others of the same kind," concludes the Pope, "cannot be surmounted solely by the power of human legislation. That can only be if the rule of conduct laid down by Christianity is understood and held in honour and if men conform their conduct to the teaching of the Church. On these conditions the general good will find a powerful auxiliary in the conciliating wisdom of the laws and in the concurrence of all the forces at the disposal of each nation."

A document published some two or three months ago, and alleged to emanate as a Papal Encyclical from Rome, was in truth the production of some enterprising American journalist. The sagacious comments, therefore, that certain of our contemporaries have made on the matter must go for nothing. It was rather a daring forgery, based generally on Papal utterances and the writings of theologians, but with a strong dash of originality thrown in to give it zest. The development of a Papal utterance by a Yankee penny-a-liner, must needs have its peculiarities.

Mr Michael Davitt has written a letter to the *London Chronicle*, exposing the disingenuousness of the Tories in pretending to fear for the action towards the working classes of an Irish Parliament. "The real objection to Home Rule," he says, "lies in the dread of the 'classes' of the three countries that an Irish Parliament, representing a nation of working farmers, labourers, and artisans, will, of necessity, devote most of its time and energies to social and labour

legislation, and that a 'dangerous lead' will thus be given to the assembled wisdom of Westminster. There will be no army and navy, no foreign policy, no external troubles or complications to take from the domestic concerns of the Irish people the care and attention of their National Assembly. It will be the wants of her four and a half million workers which will monopolise the efforts of the new Legislature of Ireland." The writer goes on to point out that the Tory leaders of old were more consistent and honest. He quotes Sir Robert Peel, for example, as having based a strong argument against O'Connell on his active sympathy for English trades-unionism. "From O'Connell's time until the present day," concludes Mr Davitt, every Irish Nationalist leader has been a warm and undeviating advocate of all measures which had for object the protection and betterment of the working classes of both Great Britain and Ireland. Every Irish National party in Parliament has consistently voted for such legislation. On the other hand every Irish Tory (or landlord), leader and party from Castlereagh to the present Ulster 'Unionist' representation, have been at one with the British Tories in opposition to such reforms as were advocated by the representatives of British and Irish labour classes. Which party, therefore—Irish Nationalist or Irish "Unionist"—is likeliest to promote useful and necessary factory and general labour legislation in a Home Rule Parliament?"

The Abbé Garnier, who is a candidate for a seat in the French Chamber, is a member of the Labour party. Needless to say the Abbé belongs to that section of the party which is Catholic. In recently addressing a workmen's meeting, the majority of which was not Catholic, the Abbé contrasted the services rendered to them by religion with those they owed to the Revolution. Religion, he said, had delivered them from slavery and had founded for them those syndicates and associations which, in the last century, were possessed of enormous wealth. The Revolution had robbed them of all this and left them often without bread and work. "I say to the working classes, 'Have done with freethinkers and Freemasons, who are leading you back not only to pagan civilisation, but to pagan barbarism. Have done with them, I say, and come to us Catholics; for it is we, and we alone, who in the name of Jesus Christ and His religion are able to give you social justice and the real food you need—food for body and soul.'"

The address of the president at the late Trades' Union Congress held in Belfast, contained one particularly significant passage. The speaker, referring to the concluding lines of Moore's "Erin the tear and the smile in thine eye," spoke as follows:—"I may be a dreamer—perhaps I am—but I have long thought that trades-unionism is yet destined to be the honoured instrument by which the beautiful sentiment expressed in the lines I have just quoted is to be realised and brought into practical operation, especially in our large centres of industry—that trades-unionism is the 'ism' amongst all others whose mission it shall be to free our unhappy land from the terrible incubus of religious bigotry and political intolerance, which have hitherto been the means of separating into hostile camps those who should be brethren and who should dwell together in unity and peace. On the 5th of March, 1892, we had a great labour demonstration in Belfast, with a view of assisting the linen-lappers in their efforts to obtain better conditions of employment. On that occasion orange and green were blended in a true union. I have it from responsible officers of the police that the demonstration referred to did more to assist them in keeping the peace than any incident which occurred in their experience."

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